



Dear Student,

Congratulations for securing a place on the History GCSE course here at Harris. You'll have had many History lessons during your time here already, and you will now engage in this subject at a higher level: welcome to the course; I look forward to delving into the past with you all.

Studying History is more than just remembering dates and names - the focus of our course is on ideas and concepts, like power and authority, political manoeuvring, the lives of ordinary people and so on; all taught through the lenses of our second-order concepts: cause and consequence, change and continuity, significance, diversity and more.

Over the next two years, we will be studying four distinct topics in History:

Britain, Health and the People - Medicine



From drilling holes in people's skulls to relieve headaches, to pouring boiling oil into gunshot wounds, and all the way to the NHS. We will study the origins of medicine and track its development over the course of 1000 years of history, from the Mediaeval period to the present day.

Elizabethan England



England's Golden Age, steered and directed by an intelligent, diplomatic, manipulative and extremely successful monarch. Elizabeth Tudor, last of her family line, and arguably the greatest monarch England ever had, struggles to manage threats from abroad, plots from her own nation, and the bickering nobles and earls who make up her Privy Council.

Conflict and Tension - WWI



The Great European powers, pushed to war by ambition, nationalism, arms races and political disasters. The Great War changed Europe forever through the sheer brutality of the conflict, and saw the end of several governments, regimes, royal families and some entire nations.

Settlement and Expansion - The American West



From 13 colonies on the East Coast, the American Dream carried the settlers West into the Great Plains, and beyond to California. The conquest of a nation in just 70 years, the destruction of the entire Native American way of life, and the industrialisation of the world's leading democratic superpower.



The History course is assessed entirely by exams - you will have two exam papers at the end of Y11 to complete, each with two of the units above. They will be two hours long but composed of just 8 and 10 questions each. These are essay questions, so you will be expected to answer them with extended written answers, but by that point you will have been as well prepared as we can make you, with structure and technique practised, knowledge secure, and confident in your own ability.

To get yourself prepared for this course, there are a few recommendations I'd like to share with you. Not least of which is the sheer amount of excellent resources on YouTube. Channels like **History Oversimplified**, **The Great War**, **BBC Teach** and the like are perfect starting points for easy watching, but engaging learning. I'll also direct your attention to **BBC Bitesize GCSE** - their History page has links to all of the topics listed above, so is a resource well worth becoming familiar with. In addition, the BBC also has a **"Time Traveller's Guide"** series on Elizabethan England, which is perfect for setting the scene for that unit.

These are points to begin with, but as always, if you still have any questions about the course, please come find either myself or Mr. O'Shea to speak to - we're happy to help, even if it just means explaining what a particular unit entails.

History is more than just books and museums - it is the story of humanity at its best and worse, and everything in between. You are starting to engage in a pursuit that has been studied for thousands of years - finding out who we are, what we can be capable of, and what mistakes we can avoid in the future.

'History doesn't repeat itself, but it does rhyme.' — Mark Twain

- Mr. West and Mr. O'Shea
Harris History Department